



Economic Development and Infrastructure Services Committee

Tuesday, 15 November 2022

The undernoted report(s) has been added to the agenda for the meeting of **Economic Development and Infrastructure Services Committee** at **09:30**, in terms of Section 50B (4)(b) of the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985 by reason of special circumstances on the Chair accepting the report as urgent business.

NOTE REFERRED TO:-

- 14a. **Forres Town Centre Improvement Plan – Funding Opportunity** **2 - 7**
Report by Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance)



**REPORT TO: ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND INFRASTRUCTURE
SERVICES COMMITTEE ON 15 NOVEMBER 2022**

**SUBJECT: FORRES TOWN CENTRE IMPROVEMENT PLAN – FUNDING
OPPORTUNITY**

**BY: DEPUTE CHIEF EXECUTIVE (ECONOMY, ENVIRONMENT AND
FINANCE)**

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 To inform the Committee that Expressions of Interest (EOIs) submitted to the National Lottery Heritage Fund and Historic Environment Scotland to support delivery of the Forres Town Centre Improvement Plan were successful, and to seek authorisation for submission of funding applications for the Development Phase to the same bodies, by no later than 17 November 2022.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of Section III A (2) of the Scheme of Administration relating to long-term financial plans.

2. REASON FOR URGENCY

- 2.1 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of the Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985, on the Chair certifying that, in his/her opinion it requires to be considered on the grounds of urgency in order to give early consideration to the request for approval to submit applications to National Lottery Heritage Fund by the deadline of 17 November and to Historic Environment Scotland by the deadline of 15 December 2022.

3. RECOMMENDATION

3.1 It is recommended that Committee agrees to:

- (i) **approve the submission of applications for the Development Phase and if successful, to consider a further report in 2023/24 concerning submission of applications for the Delivery Phase**
- (ii) **note that £20,000 is proposed as potential Council match funding from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund**

4. BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Following an 8 week public consultation process, final drafts of the Town Centre Improvement Plans were agreed by the Planning and Regulatory Services Committee on 25th October 2022 for Aberlour, Buckie, Dufftown, Forres, Keith and Lossiemouth (Paragraph 10 of the minute refers) and will be material consideration in the development management process.
- 4.2 The plans aim to support the regeneration of town centres in Moray by setting out a range of proposals, including bringing vacant and derelict sites back into use, improving active travel connections, greening and other streetscape improvements in order to create vibrant; attractive; green; healthy, safer and inclusive town centres.
- 4.3 The updated Forres Town Centre Improvement Plan objectives include:
- Explore opportunities to bring vacant and derelict buildings and sites back into use for residential and/or community uses by working collaboratively with landowners and other relevant parties;
 - Support the refurbishment and redevelopment of Forres Town Hall and creation of a Heritage Quarter within Forres;
 - Encourage people to walk and cycle (active travel) by improving paths and roads to make them easier and safer to use for people of all abilities;
 - Improve the attractiveness of the streets and public spaces through enhancements to paving, street furniture, planting, etc. (the ‘public realm’), in particular Museum Square and the lanes to the High Street from surrounding car parks;
 - Improve signage and develop an Interpretation Trail;
 - Light up important and prominent buildings such as the Town Hall;
 - Develop a shopfront improvement scheme to retain traditional facades and enhance the attractiveness of the High Street;
 - Explore the opportunity to make the town centre more accessible, inclusive and pedestrian friendly through consultation with relevant groups and a review of parking provision and disabled parking;
 - Explore further opportunities for electric vehicle (EV) and bike charging points, cycle parking and storage;
 - Support the refurbishment of public toilets that have been the subject of a Community Asset Transfer (CAT).
- 4.4 National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) and Historic Environment Scotland (HES) are working in partnership to take a collective approach to their area based funding programmes. They aim to co-fund heritage projects that support place-based regeneration and boost local economies. Applications for the same project can be submitted through each organisations’ individual grant programmes. They will work together to consider projects which – with dual funding – can maximise impact and deliver positive and lasting change for Scotland’s places and communities.

- 4.5 At the meeting of this Committee on 21 June 2022, approval was granted for submission of EOIs to the NLHF and HES to support delivery of the Forres Town Centre Improvement Plan (paragraph 7 of the minute refers). For both programmes the submitted EOIs were successful and invitations to submit development phase applications (NLHF by 17th November, HES by 15th December) were received on 24th October. The two organisations are working closely to provide joint support to projects. The Development Phase takes up to 12 months and the Delivery Phase maximum 5 years from commencement of scheme.
- 4.6 Moray Council would be the project lead for this application and will take overall responsibility for finance including procurement, administration, monitoring and evaluation and would be responsible for employing the temporary Development Officer if successful. A project board, representative of relevant stakeholders would be formed, similar to Elgin and Keith CARS projects, to help steer the development phase and approve grants in the delivery phase e.g. shopfront improvements. Initial meetings with stakeholders in the Forres area have been held to help define the development phase applications and demonstrate community support. If successful, Community Engagement activities would be carried out during the Development Phase and key documents to support the Delivery Phase applications would be produced via commissions. These include: Evaluation Strategy, Skills Audit & Traditional Skills Training Plan, Updated Conservation Area Appraisal (including costs, building valuations, materials audit, management & maintenance strategy) and Activities Plan. If the development phase applications are successful, a Partnership Agreement will be drawn up and a more detailed report will be presented to Committee in November / December 2023 to request approval to submit applications for the Delivery Phase, based on the findings of the Development Phase.
- 4.7 The Delivery Phase 2024-2029 (if application submission is approved and successful), will result in a 5 year investment programme similar to what was carried out under the Castle to Cathedral to Cashmere project. The activity will help to deliver the [Forres Town Centre Improvement Plan](#) in terms of key building repairs, public realm improvements, shop front scheme and heritage interpretation.
- 4.8 There are also additional place based funding opportunities which could also provide match funding for the Delivery Phase such as UK Shared Prosperity Fund and the Place Based Investment Programme (PBIP).

- 4.9 The recently approved Town Centre Improvement Plans (TCIP) Delivery Plans set out 'known' potential funding sources for the TCIP projects in each of the other towns. £80,000 is to be spent this financial year as part of the PBIP on town centre regeneration proposals. The Council's allocation for PBIP and the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF) for the financial year 2023/24 is awaited from the Scottish and UK Governments and further TCIP projects may be delivered through these funds. £200,000 capital was approved as part of the Economic Recovery Plan for improving and adapting town centres resulting from master planning and is included in the indicative capital plan for 2023/24. Other funding streams may become available and the Delivery Plans will be updated to reflect these should this occur.

5. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Corporate Plan and 10 Year Plan (Local Outcomes Improvement Plan (LOIP))

The project will contribute to achieving the corporate plan priority to promote economic development and growth, also the LOIP priority of a growing and sustainable economy.

(b) Policy and Legal

The Council considers support for economic development issues on their merits, against the objective to facilitate sustainable economic growth and the desired outcomes of the Ten Year Plan and Corporate Plan. For any partnership agreement for the Development Phase Legal will be consulted.

(c) Financial implications

The application to HES would request £33,000 towards the Development Phase and the application to NLHF would also request £33,000. It is proposed that match funding of £20,000 could possibly be accessed from the UK Shared Prosperity Fund in relation to Town Centre Improvements, subject to approval by Moray Economic Partnership. If this was not possible/approved, there would be an opportunity to provide match funding from the 2024-25 Place Based Investment Programme. Both schemes have the potential to secure substantial investment - NLHF Grants for Heritage can provide grants of £250,000 up to £5 million and the HES Heritage & Place is offering grants from £750,000 up to £1.5million. Costings and funding package for the Delivery Phase would be clarified during the Development Phase but it is anticipated that the total scheme would cost in the region of £3.46m.

(d) Risk Implications

None arising from this report

(e) Staffing Implications

Staff from the Economic Growth & Regeneration section will prepare and submit the Development Phase applications. At a meeting with the funders on 7th November 2022, it was recommended to include a dedicated full time staff post to lead the Development Phase and to prepare the Delivery Phase application. This would be a temporary 12 month Grade 8 Project Officer post to sit within the Economic Growth & Regeneration Team. Staffing costs are also eligible for the Delivery phase and a temporary 5 year Grade 8 Development Officer post will be included if successful. The posts will be very similar to the Elgin and Keith CARS Officer posts which were also for a period of 5 years. Due to the temporary nature of the roles, officers tend to move on to other positions before the end of the contracts however there is a slight risk of potential redundancy situation depending on the length of contract. This would be further explored with HR prior to request to submit a delivery phase application.

(f) Property

None arising from this report

(g) Equalities/Socio Economic Impact

An equality impact assessment is not required because the reason for the report is for the Committee to consider a request to submit applications for funding.

(h) Climate Change and Biodiversity Impacts

No climate change or biodiversity implications have been determined for this report because the reason for the report is for the Committee to consider a request to submit applications for funding.

(i) Consultations

Consultation has taken place with the Depute Chief Executive (Economy, Environment and Finance), the Head of Economic Growth and Development, the Legal Services Manager, the Equal Opportunities Officer, the Chief Financial Officer, the Human Resources Manager and Lissa Rowan (Committee Services Officer) have been consulted and comments received have been incorporated into the report.

6. CONCLUSION

6.1 The NLHF Grants for Heritage and the HES Heritage & Place Programme are a good opportunity to utilise the extensive preparatory work previously undertaken for Forres CARS and to create a more attractive and strengthened proposal in conjunction with the community.

6.1 The proposal aligns directly with outcomes identified in the Forres Town Centre Improvement Plan and could contribute significantly towards achieving the Vision for the area.

6.2 There are multiple strands of complementary match funding available for both development and delivery work which could result in a substantial programme of investment for the Forres area, similar to Elgin and Keith CARS.

Author of Report:	Kirsty Conti, Economic Growth & Regeneration Manager
Background Papers:	Documents on file in Economic Growth & Regeneration
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